Starting Afresh: Hygiene and Modernization in Postwar France

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Man's Voice: "The new Alfa Romeo . . . with its four-wheel disk brakes, luxurious interior, and road-holding ability, is a first-rate gran turismo*: safe, fast, and pleasant to drive with quick get-away and perfect balance."*

Woman's Voice: "It's easy to feel fresh. Soap washes, cologne refreshes, perfume perfumes. To combat under-arm perspiration I use Odorono after my bath for all-day protection. Odorono comes in spray-bottle aerosol (it's so fresh!), stick, or roll-on."

—Godard, *Pierrot le fou* (1965)

In 1956, in a short essay on skin cream he would include in his *Mythologies* published a year later, Roland Barthes names in passing the deep national psychic need preoccupying the French at that time: "'Decay is being expelled (from the teeth, the skin, the blood, the breath)': France is having a great yen [*fringale*] for cleanliness."[1] *Fringale* in French can mean either a pressing, violent hunger or an irresistible desire: France is hungry for purity, it yearns for it, demands to be clean. Barthes's *Mythologies,* with its essays on laundry detergent and semiotic analyses of bleach, its hermeneutics of skin hygiene (depths and surfaces), and its dazzling conjuring up of the smooth, streamlined gloss of the latest model Citroen, was not alone in its isolation of the ideologeme of hygiene or in its positing of a qualitatively new, French, lived relationship to cleanliness in the postwar period. Other early chroniclers of the everyday detected, if in a somewhat unconscious way, the same phenomenon. Much of the Situationist critique of everyday life revolves

1. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* translated by Richard Howard as *The Eiffel Tower* (New York: Noonday, 1979), p. 49.

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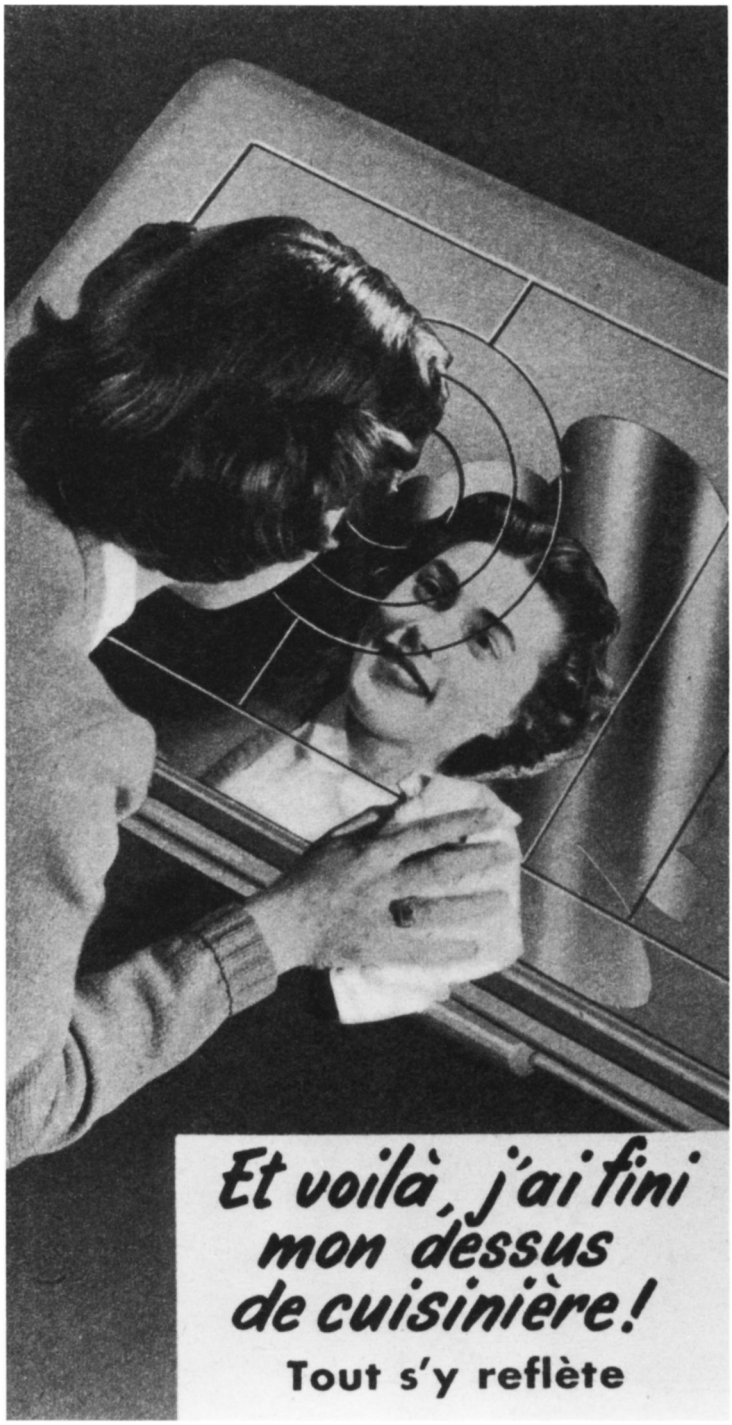

Ad for Zébrasif cleaner in Elle, *January 1955.*

around two fetishized objects: the dishwasher and the washing machine. A glance through the other books engaged in examining lived, social reality after the war reveals a striking fact: when each of the authors turns to a discussion of the new role played by advertising in postwar society, he uses as his primary example advertisements for laundry soap. Henri Lefebvre attributes his whole discovery of the concept of "everyday life" to his wife's tone of voice, one day in their apartment, when she praised a particular brand of laundry soap ("This is an *excellent* product.").[2] Jean Baudrillard, in his first (and most materialist) book, *Le Système des objets,* devotes a lengthy section to an analysis of a Pax detergent commercial, an analysis that enables him to develop a general theory of advertising that he would go on to expand in his 1966 *La Société de consommation.*[3] Yet despite this symptomatic return to the *example* of soap, to soap as an example, none of these writers goes farther than noting, as Barthes does, in his broad yet elliptical generalization: France is undergoing a massive desire to be clean. No one, that is, offers any explanation for it. Now, I think, we might begin to historicize the relation between cleanliness and capitalist modernization in postwar France, and to try to account for why such a national desire would express itself at that historical moment. How does the culture of cleanliness contribute to a new conception of nation? And why is a new conception necessary? In what follows I will begin to answer these questions by tracing the emergence of the ideologeme in the roughly ten-year period (mid-1950s to mid-1960s) that saw both the stumbling and collapse of the French empire and France's lurch into accelerated modernization.[4]

I. Housekeeping

"France was being regenerated, it was being washed of all the stains left behind by four years of Occupation."[5] Certainly the immediate postwar purges (called *épurations* or "purifications") and attempts to rid the nation of the traces of German occupation and Petainiste compromise and complicity set the tone for a new emphasis on French national purity. Historian Robert Paxton is unable to avoid a vocabulary of moral stain when he describes the postwar purges, the process whereby collaborators and those who had compromised with the Vichy regime were punished and removed from positions of authority: "Officially, the Vichy regime and all its works were simply expunged from history when France

2. Henri Lefebvre, *Le Temps des méprises* (Paris: Stock, 1934).
3. See Jean Baudrillard, *Le Système des objets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), pp. 249–52.
4. Such questions, as I argue at length elsewhere, take on new urgency in the light of the rise of the various French neoracisms of the 1980s and '90s. In *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (forthcoming, MIT Press), I attempt to show how the discourse of hygiene provides the link between those neoracisms and the ideology of capitalist modernization. I argue that the logic of racial exclusion dominating French society today is itself the outcome of the accelerated capitalist modernization the French state undertook after the war.
5. Alphonse Boudard, *La fermeture* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1986), p. 16.

was liberated. . . . [But] for good or evil, the Vichy regime had made indelible marks on French life."[6] Some stains, in other words, you can't get out. Also in the years immediately following the war, while "the *tribunaux épurateurs* were working day and night," Marthe Richard, a municipal councillor in Paris (and one of the first women pilots), was launching another social hygiene campaign, that of closing the brothels in France: "Moral cleanliness! Purification . . . Pull out the evil by the root!" Once the 177 brothels in Paris were closed down, Mme Richard called for the next step: "the mopping-up [*nettoyage*] of the streets and the sidewalks." In December of 1945, in a Declaration to the Conseil municipale, Mme Richard declared: "The moment has come to propel ourselves toward the goal of cleanliness and moral progress."[7]

It does not seem to be moral progress that Alain Robbe-Grillet had in mind in the mid-1950s when he wrote the short essays that, published together under the title of *Pour un nouveau roman,* served as a kind of manifesto for change in contemporary French high literary production. But he too, like Mme Richard, appears to be engaged in a project of redemptive hygiene. Read today, what is most striking about Robbe-Grillet's propositions for the novel is the energy with which he proposes to clean the Augean stable of the realistic novel form of the fetters and archaisms that "keep [us], ultimately, from constructing the world and the man of tomorrow."[8] The goal, for Robbe-Grillet, is to arrive at a prose form capable of representing the new, depthless here and now, the era of the masses, which is "one of administrative numbers" (p. 29), and no longer, like the earlier period of high realism associated with the figure of Balzac, marked by the rounded, individual character, no matter how typical. The novelist, for Robbe-Grillet, must be eternally vigilant, on the lookout for the tell-tale stains of an outmoded romanticism that lurk in the form of animistic descriptive adjectives and metaphors: "man and things would be cleansed of their systematic romanticism" (p. 39). All projections of depth—which is to say, of human significance—must be eliminated in order to arrive at the picture of a world that is "neither significant nor absurd. It *is,* quite simply. Around us . . . things are *there.* Their surfaces are distinct and smooth, intact" (p. 19).

The cleansing process must be thorough: "nothing must be neglected in this mopping-up operation [*entreprise de nettoyage*]" (p. 57). But how is it to be accomplished? First, by a thoroughgoing and determined cleansing of literary language: the novelist must strip away visceral adjectives, metaphors, any analogical or empathic trope that render the world of objects tragic or conductive of any human

6. Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 330–31.

7. Mme Richard, responsible in large part for the law of April 13, 1946, closing French brothels, was not alone in her quest. Raymond Bossus of the French Communist Party agreed: "Paris must maintain its status as the leading world capital and not allow itself to be dirtied any more." Cited in Boudard, *La fermeture,* p. 45.

8. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Minuit, 1963), p. 9.

significance whatsoever. Meaning—for Robbe-Grillet an extraneous and anthropomorphic addition—is a useless excess: "an explanation . . . can only be *in excess,* confronted with the presence of things" (p. 40). When this fundamental cleansing of figurative language has been accomplished, then "the world around us turns back into a smooth surface, without signification, without soul, without values, on which we no longer have any purchase" (p. 71)—a world of desire without values.

But how does one go about redeeming literary language from the polluting propensities of metaphor? The answer, for Robbe-Grillet, is simple: by trusting in "the cleansing power of the look [*le pouvoir laveur du regard*]"(p. 73). The novelist must rely entirely on the sense of vision ("in spite of everything, our best weapon"); but this new kind of visionary has none of the fanciful, impractical, or speculative qualities traditionally associated with the term. Robbe-Grillet himself trained to be an agricultural engineer, and the new seer shows the traces of such a formation: his visionary activities have been stripped down, his vision itself cleansed and focused to become a tool for conducting a set of technical, almost administrative operations based on criteria of efficacy. The "cleansing power of the look" is a humble power that limits itself to merely measuring, locating, limiting, defining, and inspecting. But this humble power is in fact a far-reaching one. In a reading of *La Jalousie* Jacques Leenhardt situates such "morbid geometrism" in the ambiance of a waning colonialism, arguing that the activity of inspection, of obsessive visual surveillance that dominates the novel constitutes the repressed situational context of the colonial situation: "the right to look without being looked at," he argues, following Sartre, is a microcosm of the colonial problem.[9]

Yet within this generalized postwar atmosphere of moral purification, national cleansing, and literary laundering, journalist Françoise Giroud could still cause, in 1951, what she later called the only scandal she involuntarily provoked, by publishing an investigation/survey in the recently launched women's magazine *Elle* entitled "La Française, est-elle propre?" (Is the French woman clean?). Perhaps certain people (Germans) had left a polluting stain on France; perhaps certain French (collaborators) had to be purged and eliminated; perhaps certain French women (brothel owners and prostitutes) were tainted; perhaps literary language was hopelessly metaphorical and in need of a good scrubbing—but to question the personal hygiene of *la Française,* the French woman? "I'll admit that investigation was really meant to provoke," writes Giroud, denying any moralizing motivation:

> When dealing with something like cleanliness, it was interesting to tell women the truth. "You buy a dress because you want to look good, to please, but under your dress what are you wearing? A garter-belt that

9. See Jacques Leenhardt's *Lecture politique du roman* (Paris: Minuit, 1973); see also Fredric Jameson, "Modernism and Its Repressed," in *The Ideologies of Theory,* vol. 1 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 167–80.

> hasn't been washed in two years. That's the national average. So don't go around scolding your child because he doesn't wash his hands before sitting down to meals. You're the one who's dirty."[10]

The historical record can be expunged, the foreign occupier driven out, the morally diseased or tainted elements of the national body cleansed or surgically removed, but to target a nation's women? This—as Frantz Fanon said around the same time apropos of France's own campaign to colonize Algeria according to the well-known formula "Let's win over the women and the rest will follow"—is to target the innermost structure of the society itself.[11]

To evoke the colonial situation here is not gratuitous; I want to suggest that in the roughly ten-year period of the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s in France—the decade of both decolonization and the move toward American-style mass consumption—the colonies are in some sense "replaced," and the effort that once went into maintaining and disciplining a colonial people and situation becomes instead concentrated on a particular "level" of metropolitan existence: everyday life. (This is what is meant by the capsule phrase "the colonization of everyday life," proposed by the Situationists and by Henri Lefebvre at the time.) And women, of course, as the primary victims and arbiters of social reproduction, as the subjects of everydayness and as those most subjected to it, as the class of people most responsible for consumption, and those responsible for the complex movement whereby the social existence of human beings is produced and reproduced, *comprise* the everyday: its managers, its embodiment. The transfer of a colonial political economy to a domestic one involved a new emphasis on controlling *domesticity,* a new concentration on the political economy of the household. An efficient, well-run, harmonious home is a national asset: the quality of the domestic environment has a major influence on the physique and health of the nation. A chain of equivalences is at work here; the prevailing logic runs something like this: if the woman is clean, the family is clean, the nation is clean. If the French woman is dirty, then France is dirty and backward. But France can't be dirty and backward, because that is the role played by the colonies. But there are no more colonies. If Algeria is becoming an independent nation, then France must become a *modern* nation: some distinction between the two must still prevail. France must, so to speak, clean house; reinventing the home is reinventing the nation. And thus, the new 1950s interior: the home as the basis of the nation's

10. See Giroud, *I Give You My Word,* trans. Richard Seaver (Boston: Houghton Miflin, 1974), pp. 127–28. Giroud's survey revealed that 25 percent of French women never brushed their teeth, and that 39 percent washed themselves once a month.

11. Frantz Fanon, "L'Algérie se dévoile," in *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: Maspero, 1959), translated by Haakon Chevalier as "Algeria Unveiled," in *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), pp. 37–38: "This enabled the colonial administration to define a precise political doctrine: 'If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women.'"

welfare; the housewife—manager or administrator and victim, occupying a status roughly equivalent to the *évolué* or educated native in the colonial situation—efficiently caring for children and workers. Or, in a slightly later historical development, the home as elaborate catalogue-fantasy of accoutrements—the new *luxe, calme et volupté* of modern living proposed in the first chapter of Georges Perec's 1966 *Les Choses.* Here the reader meanders through pages of description of objects and furniture before becoming aware of the existence of a human being, one whose invisible labor of upkeep and maintenance is naturalized, part of the surroundings: "There, life would be easy, simple. All the servitudes, all the problems brought by material existence would find a natural solution. A cleaning woman would come every morning."[12]

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Women's magazines played a leading role in disseminating and normalizing the state-led modernization effort. Magazines targeting a specifically female readership were born in France in the 1930s, but they knew a significant surge in number, circulation, and readership in the decade following World War II.[13] *Marie-France* was founded in 1944, *Elle* (with Françoise Giroud and Hélène Lazareff at the helm) a year later; *Femmes d'aujourd'hui* appeared in 1950, and the first reissue of *Marie-Claire,* after a long hiatus during the 1940s, in 1954.[14] The story of the early years of *Elle* is in many ways exemplary; its founder, Hélène Lazareff, had spent five years in the United States working with the best American magazines, including *Harper's.* Among the technological innovations she brought back with her from the States was a perfected use of color unknown in France; she became the first French magazine editor to use color photography. Her colleague at the magazine, Françoise Giroud, describes her:

> With her American culture, she was the vehicle for a modernity that, for better or worse, would invade French society. She was made for the world of disposable cigarette lighters, dresses that last for a season, plastic packaging. In a ravaged France, the society of consumption was still far away. But Hélène was already the mouthpiece of its hysteria for change.[15]

Together, Giroud and Lazareff constructed the composite portrait of the ideal reader of *Elle;* they called her "the reader from Angoulême," and endowed her

12. Georges Perec, *Les Choses* (Paris: René Juilliard, 1965), p. 24.
13. In 1961, for example, 755,000 copies of each issue of *Elle* were sold; 1,132,000 copies of *Marie-Claire.* See Evelyne Sullerot, *La Presse feminine* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1983), p. 83. Readership of magazines is more difficult to gauge, since each copy of a magazine is commonly read by more than one person. According to *Elle* magazine itself, one out of every six French women read *Elle* in 1955.
14. The first postwar issue of *Marie-Claire* sold out after only a few hours on the newsstands; the next issue reported 500,000 issues sold.
15. Françoise Giroud, *Leçons particulières* (Paris: Livres de poche, 1990), p. 122.

with all the frustrations and unmet desires of a war-deprived adolescence. But if the targeted reader was a young woman from Angoulême, the image of femininity constructed by the magazine had more to do with its editor Hélène Lazareff's attachment to what Giroud calls "the *joie de vivre,* the optimism, the generosity emanating from that country [the United States] in those days." The United States was, above all, a "happy country" that possessed "that American health made up of equal portions of optimism and dynamism." And the look projected by the American woman of that time was, for Giroud, one of hygienic self-assurance: "In those days, an American woman was someone whose hair was always freshly washed and combed." The success of *Elle,* she writes, "coincided with the beginning of vast social changes in France, of a break that came out of the war and the lack of consumer goods," and with "the appetite for frivolity, for changes of taste in clothing and dress that the war had wrought."[16]

What Lefebvre called "the domesticated sublime of the world of women's magazines"[17] drew the attention of all the analysts of everyday life in the late 1950s and early '60s—Morin, Barthes, and Lefebvre himself—each of whom devoted pages of often speculative prose to the phenomenon.[18] An article published in *Esprit* in 1959 by Ménie Grégoire undertook a more systematic analysis, dividing the contents of the four leading magazines into five categories: romance, fashion and beauty, cooking, practical advice, and culture. She then provides a statistical breakdown of the amount of coverage given to each category. Implicit in Grégoire's analysis is the magazines' directive that these five categories and only these categories constitute a woman's life: her schedule, her *emploi du temps.* Women's magazines proposed above all to fill up that schedule, to provide a daily narrative of female existence involving shopping, housekeeping, fashion: daily life is full, complete, and seamless—thus, accomplishment, fulfillment, satisfaction. A frequent use of *sondages* or readers' surveys (emerging now for the first time) allowed the magazines to conform to their public, to address, despite regional nuances, *la femme typique,* and in so doing, to avoid scandal. The French woman of 1959, writes Grégoire, was easily shockable, and shock was to be avoided at all costs.[19] As such, women's magazines were both the result of and the application to the quotidian of a set of techniques oriented by market research.

If these five categories constitute a woman's life, what was left out? First, according to Grégoire, any notion of career ambition: all such interests on the part of women characters in the romantic *feuilletons,* for example, disappear with the advent of passion. Second, formal, even nonpartisan, politics. An article that

16. Giroud, *I Give You My Word,* pp. 106–8.
17. See Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne,* vol. 2 (Paris: Arche, 1961), pp. 84–91, for his discussion of the women's press.
18. See especially—in addition to Barthes's *Mythologies* and Lefebvre's *Critique de la vie quotidienne,* vol. 2—Edgar Morin, *L'Esprit du temps* (Paris: Grasset, 1962).
19. See Ménie Grégoire, "La presse feminine," in *Esprit* (July–Aug. 1959), pp. 17–34.

appeared in *Elle* in 1955 by Françoise Giroud entitled "Apprenez la politique" might appear exceptional; in fact, it confirms Grégoire's conclusions. The article is an informal survey that tries to answer the question "Are French women interested in politics?" Giroud concludes negatively, though she ends the piece by conjuring up an ideal for women to strive for: not to *be* a politician but rather to be a woman "who has succeeded in finding her way through the fog and who can in some ways 'follow the game' without herself feeling capable—or desirous—of playing herself."[20] She should become someone whose political ignorance, in other words, is not advertised.

Third, no scientific or economic information is offered to women who in fact buy some 60 percent of the products consumed.

Career, politics, science, and economic information are relegated, in a strict gender division of access, off limits: "In France, politics is a machine, and women detest mechanics."[21] Françoise Giroud's own journalistic career is a case in point. Editor-in-chief of *Elle* until 1952, she is then chosen by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber to co-direct with him the new news-and-information magazine *L'Express*. She in fact runs the magazine, often single-handedly during his long absences in Algeria and elsewhere, for seven years. When she quits in May of 1960, the magazine flounders:

> But what *L'Express* was going to miss the most was the intellectual openness of its female director. Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber was only interested in politics. Giroud broadened the horizon of the journal to include literature, the cinema, philosophy, and everyday life. And this void would be felt by Servan-Schreiber more than anyone else:
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> "We must find someone to replace Françoise for everything that isn't politics in the magazine. A woman, undoubtedly."[22]

Servan-Schreiber did, in the end, find another woman—another Françoise, in fact. Glowing in her success as a novelist and voice of youth, Françoise Sagan replaced Giroud three weeks later to cover "everything that wasn't politics"; she lasted only briefly on the job. But Sagan's first published editorial in the magazine, unexpectedly taking up the case of tortured FLN prisoner Djamila Boupacha,[23] was itself an indicator that the rigid distinction between politics and everyday life, technique and sexuality, men's realms and women's, armies and civilians, was beginning to give way in the France of torture and the Algerian war. Two years later, when the magazine hits another sales slump after the end of the Algerian War, Servan-

20. Françoise Giroud, "Apprenez la politique," in *Elle*, May 2, 1955.
21. Marcelle Segal, one of the most popular advisers to the lovelorn (*Courrier du coeur*), quoted in Grégoire, "La presse feminine," p. 26.
22. Serge Siritzky and Françoise Roth, *Le roman de l'Express* (Paris: Atelier Marcel Jullian, 1979), p. 202.
23. See Françoise Sagan, "La Jeune fille et la grandeur," in *L'Express* (June 16, 1960); reprinted in Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Hamini, *Djamila Boupacha* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), trans. Peter Green (New York: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 245–46.

Schreiber launches a full-scale modernization of its format in an attempt to attract the new, middle-class readership. The magazine "must be powerful as a factory; it must obey industrial laws";[24] but it must, above all, be produced by offset printing, so that readers would no longer dirty their hands.

According to Grégoire's statistical analysis, it is affairs of the heart—advice to the lovelorn, romantic *feuilletons,* even astrology can be put in this category—that dominates the women's press, with fashion and beauty coming in second. Only one magazine, *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui,* specializes primarily in the category that usually comes third: practical (or household) advice (*conseils practiques*). Under this rubric comes housekeeping, cleaning, household matters, hygiene, and health—in short, that which constitutes the traditional woman's *métier,* then undergoing a dramatic resurgence. "Women are not reluctant to accept help in managing their time and their cares, when it comes to work made up of the most menial, the most monotonous, the most solitary of tasks."[25] Far from being upset, French women greeted with great enthusiasm the arrival, in 1958, of two new magazines devoted to *conseils pratiques* onto what seemed to be an already saturated market: *Femme pratique* and *Madame Express*—the latter published for a brief time in a "conjugal" unit attached to *L'Express,* before divorcing itself off into a separate format. *Femme pratique* eliminated the romantic advice columns and the short stories; it billed itself as "a technical journal for the woman in the home," the "review for the household enterprise." Its first issue was published at 250,000 copies, and its second at 450,000; *Madame Express* knew a similarly spectacular ascendancy. The way for these more specialized organs of household technology was paved by the new kinds of attention given to issues of cleanliness and housekeeping in the standard women's press. The first postwar reissue of *Marie-Claire* in October 1954, for example, declared its intention to "help women feel at ease in the modern age." That age, it goes on to describe, is "the atomic age but also the age of abundance, of emancipation, of social progress, the age of light, airy houses, of healthy children, of the refrigerator, pasteurized milk, the washing machine, the age of comfort, of quality, and of bargains." The January l0, 1955, issue of *Elle* is devoted entirely to "whiteness"—"Beau BLANC, BLANC bébé, boire BLANC"—to the importance, that is, of bleach, of white layettes for babies, of schoolchildren drinking pasteurized milk. One article concentrates on helping women organize their "ideal linen closet": "You have always dreamed of a practical and pretty linen closet in which the family trousseau can be arranged in order. We have realized this dream for you, by choosing new ideas, the best prices, the best quality." An advertisement shows a woman contemplating her own beaming image in a freshly polished stove top: "*Et voilà!* I've finished my stove top. Everything is reflected there!"

24. Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, quoted in Winock, *Chronique des années soixante* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), p. 66.
25. Grégoire, "La presse feminine," p. 24.

But what is reflected there? In a similar image taken from Zola's novel about an earlier stage of commodification in France, *Au Bonheur des dames,* a group of women are seen hovering over a pool of colored silk for sale in a department store, entranced: "The women, pale with desire, bent over as if to look at themselves. And before this falling cataract they all remained standing, with the secret fear of being carried away by the irruption of such luxury, and with the irresistible desire to jump in amidst it and be lost."[26] In the roughly one hundred years separating the two images of female narcissistic self-satisfaction, much has changed. In Zola the women see their reflection in a sea of silk and both want and resist the desire to throw themselves in: the relation between woman and commodity is one charged with a surfeit of the eroticism of boundary loss; self-definition via luxury and pleasure (the silk is called "Paris-Bonheur"). In the 1950s advertisement the shining but unyeilding stove-top surface reflects back to the woman the image of accomplishment; there is no give to the surfaces, no tactile dimension, even an imagined one—just smooth shine. The narcissistic satisfaction offered is one of possession and self-possession: clean surfaces and sharp angles. The completion of a household task completes the woman. Everything is reflected there: woman defined midway between the twin poles of domestic science and object fetishism.

The May 1955 issue of *Marie-Claire* contains a how-to guide for "winning the hygiene battle": an article devoted to how best to socialize the next generation of French children to have what the author calls "the cleanliness reflex." The key to making childhood cleanliness an internalized, automatic response is to force the child to repeat a number of ritualized gestures every day: to make children understand the link between dirty hands and illness, for example, make them wear white gloves for an afternoon and, at the end of the day, show them all the "microbes" on the gloves. "The gesture of taking a clean handkerchief from the cupboard each morning should be as automatic as that of grabbing his notebook for school."[27]

The article concludes with a report on the activities of the "Bureau de la propreté," a subdivision of the Ministry of Education. Since 1953 the Bureau sponsored a contest for schoolchildren between the ages of eight and fourteen whose theme was "bodily cleanliness." Perhaps, speculates the author, the success of the contest accounts for the fact that consumption of bath soap increased in the year 1954 by 81 grams a person—reaching 432 grams a year. In fact, items related to health and personal hygiene were among the goods for which demand in France was rising fastest: consumption of these items rose 86 percent in the 1950s.[28] Schoolchildren were not the only competitors in national hygiene forums. A contest for the best housekeeper that originated in the interwar years gained

26. Emile Zola, *Au Bonheur des dames* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), translated anonymously as *The Ladies' Paradise,* intro. Kristin Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 93.
27. Anon., "La Propreté de l'enfant," *Marie-Claire* (May 1955), pp. 98–99.
28. Jean-Pierre Rioux, *La France de la Quatrième République* (Paris: Seuil, 1980, 1983), translated by Godfrey Rogers as *The Fourth Republic 1944–1958* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 370.

considerable influence in the 1950s. Women were encouraged to compete with each other within the confines of the traditional *métier de la femme* to provide the cleanest and healthiest home environment for their family. To compete at fair advantage meant having the proper accoutrements or tools, as well as the science to make use of them. Claire Duchen has emphasized the importance of domestic science textbooks in this endeavor—volumes like Paulette Bernège's *De la méthode ménagère,* originally published in 1928 but reedited for use in domestic science courses in schools throughout the 1950s, devoted to "the rational organization of domestic work, care of the house, sewing and maintaining clothes and linens, whitening and ironing . . . a theoretical and practical teaching of childrearing and of hygiene as well as an initiation into familial psychology and morals."[29] By the early 1950s, however, many Parisian women were also attending the yearly *Salon des arts ménagers* where new and futuristic appliances were displayed in dream arrangements ("a household blessed by God" intones the announcer on the newsreel showing the 1953 *Salon)* and demonstrated by white-gloved technicians.[30] In the 1953 newsreel the viewer is guided through the exhibition by the Dupont couple—statistically the most prevalent French surname—who, we learn, have "located an apartment," i.e., triumphed over the postwar housing crisis, and immediately

> rushed to the *Salon des arts ménagers* to relearn the art of living well. After years of restaurant eating they will reacquaint themselves with the recipes of good French cooking. . . . In front of the refrigerators and washing machines Madame Dupont imagined the jealous fit her best friend would have whose entire apartment fit into the Duponts' new bathroom. . . . The apartment of 1953: the ideal place where everything is simple and easy.[31]

Or Perec: "There, life would be easy, simple." The newsreel concludes with the Duponts rushing off, their purchases decided, to "the dream they've held close to their hearts for so long": "their first evening 'at home'" ("at home" is in English).

The newsreel narration performs an important function which we might begin to isolate: that of reconciling past and future. Presumably, after having survived the housing crisis which rendered them kitchenless, the Duponts will now *re*learn the traditional French recipes, not in grandmother's dark and somewhat dank kitchen, but rather in their new and enviable techno-environment. The

29. Dominique Ceccaldi, *Politique française de la famille* (Paris: Privat, 1957), quoted in Claire Duchen, "Occupation Housewife: The Domestic Ideal in 1950s France," *French Cultural Studies* 2 (1991), p. 4.

30. Parisian fascination with *les arts ménagers* dates from the 1920s: the first of the yearly expositions opened to 100,000 visitors in 1923. In 1926 the *Salon des Arts ménagers* took up a more luxurious residence in the Grand Palais. The *Salon* was not held from 1939 to 1948; when it resumed, attendance mushroomed and by 1955 there were about 1.5 million visitors. See Yvette Lebrigand, "Les Archives du Salon des arts ménagers," *Bulletin de l'institut d'histoire du temps présent* (Dec. 1986), pp. 9–13.

31. 1953 Salon des Arts ménagers, Actualités Gaumont.

authentic *art de bien vivre* is perfectly compatible with the streamlined appliances of modernity; in fact, the appliances of the future, "*les amis de la femme,*" are the best way to recreate the meals of the past! One can gain access to the future without loss; nothing is left behind, nothing is wasted.

The brief newsreel narration does much to allay the anxieties of modernization. A wonderful example of Lefebvre's discourse of the "domesticated sublime" ("where one speaks familiarly of the sublime and of the familiar with the tone of the sublime"),[32] the narration brings God into the household, and equates dreams and ideals with bathrooms and appliances. Any fears that might arise from having such advanced technological gadgetry *within* the confines of the domestic environment are put to rest: the domestic interior, we are assured, can contain, reinfold the most abrupt technical acceleration. This reinfolding inward—back onto the authentic French life (the old recipes) and the private interiority of the domestic—this reprivatization, is all made possible, of course, by technology, by the unacknowledged opening out onto multinational products and Americanization: the newsreel concludes with "at home" rather than "chez eux."

A young married couple interviewed by Chris Marker in his 1962 documentary about everyday life in Paris, *Le joli mai,* embraces the ideology of a newly privatized domestic life centered on the couple. When questioned if they think about political events—we are on the eve of the signing of the Evian Accords which have brought the eight-year Algerian War to an end—they reply negatively: such things have nothing to do with them, they say; they wish for nothing so much as to "have the pleasure of setting up house" (*avoir le plaisir de préparer son intérieur*). Marker's own evaluation of the limitations of such a definition of happiness is clear; the footage he includes from a *Salon des arts ménagers* is preceded by the subtitle "The dream is being consumed ready-made" (*Le rêve se consomme tout préparé*). His linking of the new ideology of the privatized, consuming couple to a national agenda is also explicit: the film ends with the image of a prison in the shape of a hexagon.

This reprivatization of daily life, which we might date as beginning in the early 1950s with the peaking and then slow subsiding of the worst of the postwar housing shortages, modifies and at the same time confirms dailiness in modern France. The task of both modifying and confirming the everyday fell squarely on the shoulders of women. Appliances, after all, were *les amis de la femme:* they formed new links between the woman and the society that created them, and they imposed a new set of comportments and behaviors. The woman in the *Marie-Claire* advertisement sees reflected in her gleaming stove top a new criterion for fulfillment and satisfaction, a new identity; Madame Dupont sees reflected in the washing machine she is purchasing the jealous fit of her friend. The commodity form does not merely symbolize the social relations of modernity, it is the central source of their origin—in this case, a new arena of competition between women. But the ultimate

32. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne,* vol. 2, p. 88.

Ad for all-electric home in Marie-Claire, *May 1955.*

competition for the French woman, her distant horizon of excellence, was the American woman who washed her hair every day. Modernity was measured against American standards; materials imported from America—stainless steel, Formica, and plastic—were valued both for their connotation of modernity and because they were easy to clean.

Subsequent newsreel clips of the *Salon des arts ménagers* abandon the Duponts as guides and offer instead a pair of women to take the viewer through the show. The women presumably constitute friends/competitors rather than a domestic unit; their fictional husbands, we might also presume, are off attending the equally popular yearly event, the *Salon de l'automobile.* In Christiane Rochefort's 1961 novel, *Les Petits enfants du siècle,* husband and wife battle over which large-scale commodity to buy next when the government childbirth allocations come through: a car for the husband or a refrigerator for the wife. It is left to the teenage narrator to attempt to find noncommodified affection and pleasure in the arms of an Italian immigrant construction worker. (As in Rochefort's 1963 *Les Stances à Sophie,* the male Italian peasant offers a surfeit of masculine directness in a world otherwise hopelessly mediated by cumbersome consumer durables.) Where Rochefort and Simone de Beauvoir focused on the automobile as metonymy for the masculine embrace of the values and privileges of technocracy, two somewhat earlier texts, Elsa Triolet's 1959 *Roses à crédit,* the opening volume of her fictional trilogy, *The Age of Nylon,* and Boris Vian's song from the late 1950s, "Complainte du progrès," feature men as the gender immune to new, modern desires, the untainted repository for some older, precommodity form of romance or desire—a nonreified desire. (The Situationists also believed in "love" or "desire" as an alternative to commodification; their wry comment, "Given the choice between fulfilling love and a washing machine, young people in the U.S. and the Soviet Union both choose the washing machine," still holds out the possibility of making the other choice, that is, the belief in a desire that is not determined by capitalism, a "pure" desire outside reification.) Triolet's novel, which brought her her first commercial success since she became the first woman to win the Prix Goncourt in 1945, is essentially a morality tale about a young provincial girl, transfixed by the gleam of commodities, who succumbs to newly available credit to outfit her new "modern" existence in the city, who struggles with sky-rocketing debt, and who finally returns full circle to her abject origins to die a disfiguring and wretched death at the hands of sharp-toothed natural elements. The opening chapters of the novel, which recount the young Martine's acquisition of a subjectivity and an ambition sufficient to propel her from the depths of the virtually medieval forest where she lives with her countless siblings and promiscuous mother (whose sheets, washed only twice a year, emit foul odors that repel the child), attribute that acquisition to a finely developed relationship to hygiene: "She didn't know why dirty sheets, snot, rats, and excrement from time to time made her vomit."[33] The tale that

33. Elsa Triolet, *Roses à crédit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p. 31.

follows is in many ways an Ur-narrative of what Edgar Morin (who grants the same historical movement of peasant women to the cities a positive, liberational valence) calls the "decolonization of the peasant woman."[34] For Morin, too, the acquisition of a "filth complex" is the first step in a process of gaining psychological autonomy and an expanded personality and horizon that will eventually propel the peasant woman out of the countryside. The rural woman's construction of a cleanliness threshold is likened by Morin to the psychological process analyzed by Fanon: the formation of a new subjectivity on the part of colonized men engaged together in violent revolutionary struggle. Morin charts the formation of the new subjectivity as follows: first the media infiltrations—via press or radio—that bring advertisements of new ways of comfort and physical hygiene to the depths of the countryside; then a hard-won acquisition for the home (male farmers, if they were inclined to modernize, spent all of their money on the outdoors—on tractors, specifically, and resisted purchases for the home), some initial commodity which in turn creates new motivations for comfort. The crucial stage is reached when what Morin calls "the crystallization of the interior" occurs: a kind of drawing of a definitive boundary between interior and exterior that gives the wife a "realm of her own" and, by extension, a new psychological interiority and depth that will lead to autonomy. The psychological liberation is dependent on the Manichean division of the interior from the exterior, the latter now viewed as sordid, dirty, and repellent to the woman, who vigilantly polices its various invasions into her realm in the form of grime and odors tracked in from the outside on bodies and hands, even under fingernails. (Morin quotes a fifty-five-year-old farmer speaking of the women in his village: "They don't like dirt under their nails; they want to put red polish *on* their nails.") All of the new repulsions and aversions coalesce into a "filth complex" that accompanies the definitive eruption of the new domestic model into the female psyche and that in turn translates into a global repudiation of the peasant condition.

Through reconquering and modernizing the domestic interior, rural women accomplish their own psychological modernization which will eventually propel them in a near unanimous feminine migration out of the servitudes of the countryside to urban areas, themselves associated unequivocably with liberation. Morin sums up the dialectic as follows: by closing the farmhouse off to the earth, you open it up to the world.

34. See Edgar Morin, *Commune en France: La Métamorphose de Plodémet* (Paris: Fayard, 1967). Morin's study is the best of the many ethnographies of rural France that appeared in the 1960s as intellectuals began to chart the final days of the peasant class in France. Whereas books like Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen* and Beauroy's *The Wolf and the Lamb* had told the story of the passing of the old peasant culture and the arrival of a new urban mass culture, focusing on the period of 1870–1914 as the moment when the old folk culture finally died, Morin argues that the old culture survived into the 1950s, and was only killed off by consumer culture and mass media. The *exode rural* became heavy in the 1950s, with between 100,000 and 150,000 people leaving the countryside for the cities each year (Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, p. 181). Morin argues that peasant women were the secret agents of modernization.

Morin's decolonization narrative—he refers to French agricultural laborers as "the wretched of the earth"—was based on an ethnographic study he performed in the mid-1960s of a village in Brittany called Plodémet. Triolet's character Martine is born in a village only sixty kilometers from Paris but one whose fundamental rhythms, it seems, have gone unchanged since the Middle Ages; her desires and her own flight to Paris are represented at least initially as no different from those of the women Morin encountered in Brittany. Like them her subjectivity is formed through the "crystallization of the interior"; but because she is just a child and her own house is irredeemably filthy, she must find it elsewhere: in the clean, shiny universe of feminine beauty and hygiene, the hairdresser's shop. Her ascendance into this adopted world is given all the importance of a religious conversion: "No palace out of *A Thousand and One Nights* could have overwhelmed a human being more, all the perfumes of Arabia could never have given anyone the intense pleasure Martine felt in that little house saturated with the odors of shampoo, lotions and cologne"(p. 39). The chapter that recounts her first bath is entitled "The Baptismal Font of Modern Comfort," and, as an evocation of the domesticated sublime, is worth quoting at some length:

> When Martine saw the bathtub for the first time and Cécile told her to soak herself in all that water, she was overcome by an emotion that had something sacred about it, as though she were about to be baptized. . . . Modern comfort happened to her all in one fell swoop, with running water, gas heating, electricity. . . . She never became completely used to it when Mama Donzert said to her: "Go take you bath" . . . she felt a delicious little thrill. . . . The tile of the bathtub was smooth, smooth, the water was gentle, gentle, the bar of soap, all new, produced pearly suds . . . a pink and sky-blue sponge. . . . The milky light-bulb lit up every innermost recess of the bathroom, and Martine scrubbed every innermost recess of her body with soap, pumice-stone, brushes, sponges, scissors. (pp. 39–40)

It is in this way that Martine begins her transition "from one universe to another" (p. 47).[35]

But whatever sacred, purifying, or expansive properties that are associated with her newly acquired rituals of beauty and hygiene degenerate over time after she moves to the city. Over the course of the novel they are reduced to a set of

35. Actually the key fetish item that begins the process of Martine's transition is a phosphorescent statue of the Virgin Mary that her hairdresser friend brings her from Lourdes. Combined in this small fetish, bequeathed by the good, clean "modern" mother, are all the necessary elements for Martine's transformation: shininess, curative bathing, the sacred, and transcendent femininity.

Martine's choice of occupation reflects a significant social phenomenon: in the six-year period between 1952 and 1958 the number of people employed in hairdressing salons tripled (Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, p. 329).

obsessional character traits and compulsions that control Martine's life and, far from expanding her world as Morin would have it, actually limit her actions and destroy what affective life remains for her. Martine's husband, who more successfully negotiates the perils of modernization, is powerless to influence her and is progressively excluded from her life:

> How could he compete with Martine's ideal press-button universe? She was a savage dazzled by the brilliant baubles the white men dangled in front of her. She adored modern comfort like a pagan, and she had been given credit, the magical brass ring from the fairy-tales that you rub to make a genie appear to grant your every wish. (p. 197)

Both Triolet and Morin draw an analogy from the colonies to describe the situation of French rural women. But where Morin sees the move to the city and the resulting change in social consciousness as a "decolonization" of "the wretched of the earth," Triolet shows her savage to be a dupe of empty promises, blinded by the shiny surfaces of modern appliances, enslaved to an endless spiral of debt, and, if anything, newly and more inextricably colonized. Martine's class and regional origins, to which she must ineluctably return (having repudiated them so completely) act to exclude her from the gains and pleasures of modernization.

But the unhappy fate of female characters as different from Martine as the four shopgirls working in an appliance store selling *electro-ménagers* in Claude Chabrol's brutally realist 1960 film *Les Bonnes femmes,* or Elise in Claire Etcherelli's 1967 novel *Elise ou la vraie vie* newly arrived from the provinces to work in the car factories, suggests that the difficulty they all share has more to do with what Adrian Rifkin has called the difficult conjugation of women with urban pleasure. "What is pleasure for women as a subject in the city, and why is it not the same as man's? Why is one's libertine and the other's 'normal'?"[36] In *Elise ou la vraie vie* Elise's overdetermined childhood search for a room—a self, interiority, an identity separate from her brother's—is transformed into her late-night treks across Paris with her would-be Algerian lover, Arezki; multiple layers of surveillance, from the factory to the police, from the FLN to even her leftist, pro-Algerian brother, prevent them from finding a room in which to be together. Her brother, on the other hand, a provincial and a worker like herself, has rooms and lovers to spare. In Chabrol's film what Edgar Morin calls "the surprising conjunction between feminine eroticism and modern capitalism, that looks for ways to stimulate consumption"[37] is made all too clear, as the camera looks in the shop windows to show the girls arrayed, displayed, and waiting, posed next to the washing machines and vacuum cleaners, in a shop situated tellingly next door to

36. See Adrian Rifkin, *Street Noises: Parisian Pleasure 1900–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 66. Rifkin's book poses this question in the context of an illuminating discussion of the life and songs of French realist *chanteuses* compared with the career of Maurice Chevalier.
37. Morin, *L'Esprit du temps,* p. 138.

the Grisbi striptease joint. Unlike Martine, these girls want love, not a dishwasher. Adrift in romantic fantasy fed by the urban setting, they suffer the unchanging *ennui* of the workplace, the petty tyrannies of the shopowner, and a bare, celibate quasi-dormitory homelife not unlike that of immigrant male factory workers. The frustration (verging on tragic consequences) of the shopgirls is juxtaposed to the traditionally easy, confident to the point of sadistic, access of the men in the film—from the aging shopowner to the frequenters of the Grisbi Club next door—to a variety of urban erotic pleasures.

Boris Vian's song, "Complainte du progrès," a kind of contemporary *Au Bonheur des dames,* shows women captivated by the immediacy of the commodity world being transformed into commodities themselves. His complaint against progress echoes that of Martine's husband, powerless to compete with the gadgets women want. Men too, then, along with women, the elderly, the young, the working class, the traditional petite bourgeoisie, immigrants, the peasantry, intellectuals and other cultural elites, could construct themselves as the primary victims of capitalist modernization:

> Before when you went wooing/You spoke of love/To prove your passion/You offered your heart/Today it's not the same/It's changed, it's changed/To seduce your dear angel/You whisper in her ear/Ah . . . darling, come kiss me/And I will give you/A refrigerator/A shiny scooter/An atomizer/And some Dunlopillo/A stove/With a glass oven/A pile of covers/And cake-pans/An egg-beater/To make vinaigrette/A beautiful odorizer/To eat up odors/A waffle iron/An airplane for two/And we'll be happy.[38]

Cars and refrigerators as objects of choice to designate the sexes; the iconography is most apparent in film, where directors made use of the sheer size of these cargo-cult objects in shocking visuals. Unlike television, or subsequent audio-visual, information, or computer technologies, the car and the refigerator have the iconographic advantage of having a single physical unity; each is a "total object" in and of itself. Perhaps the most memorable scene in Dino Risi's 1962 film *Il Sorpasso* is one that verges on a kind of gender aggression. Hot-rodder Vittorio Gassman drives his sports car so recklessly on a narrow and remote country road that he causes a truck to overturn, spilling its load of shiny new white refrigerators into the dirt; the camera lingers just a second on the incongruous refrigerators, glistening like so many beached whales in the sunlight. Jacques

38. "Autrefois pour faire sa cour/On parlait d'amour/Pour mieux prouver son ardeur/On offrait son coeur/Aujourd'hui c'est plus pareil/Ça change, ça change/Pour séduire le cher ange/On lui glisse à l'oreille/Ah . . . gudule . . . viens m'embrasser . . . /Et je te donnerai/Un frigidaire/Un joli scooter/Un atomizer/Et du Dunlopillo/Une cuisinière/Avec un four en verre/Des tas de couverts/Et des pelles à gateaux/Une tourniquette/Pour fair la vinaigrette/Un bel aerateur/Pour bouffer les odeurs/Des draps qui chauffent/Un pistolet à gaufres/Un avion pour deux/Et nous serons heureux." Boris Vian, "Complainte du progres," in *Chansons et poèmes* (Paris: Editions Tchou, 1960), pp. 95–98.

Ad for Frigéco in Marie-Claire, *May 1955.*

Rozier's 1961 *Adieu Philippine* uses a similar economy to designate the separate realms of the genders: Michel, a young technician who has just co-purchased (with three male friends) his first car, befriends two women who act in TV commercials. In the first commercial audition the two women are dressed alike and surrounded by thousands of identical boxes of laundry soap; hundreds of takes fail. Their breakthrough happens when they sign a contract with a refrigerator firm. Dressed as Eskimoes and surrounded by penguins and igloos on a fake ice floe, they recite the slogan: "Even in the North Pole, you need a refrigerator." But perhaps the most heavily weighted use of the gendered iconography is found in Jacques Demy's perversely realistic historical musical about an automobile mechanic who gets drafted, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (1964). In this film the length of time that transpires between the mechanic's departure for Algeria and his return is measured not by some representation of the hardships of war (unseen in the film), nor by his lover's (played by Catherine Deneuve) pregnancy and childbirth, nor by her abandoning him for another man whom she subsequently marries, but rather by the transformation—seen through the dismayed eyes of the returning soldier—of the quaint umbrella boutique where Catherine Deneuve and her mother once struggled to make ends meet and where the lovers had spent so many happy afternoons, into a cold-looking store selling washing machines and refrigerators.[39]

The object itself, the refrigerator or "cold spot" as it was called in its early incarnations in the States, with its pressed steel casing and seamless finish, conveyed the image of absolute cleanliness and newfound hygiene: its brilliant white finish was the physical embodiment of health and purity. The refrigerator as mass object of desire and one of the "mature" consumer durables was indeed the object-fetish for the new modernized home.[40] Its arrival into Martine's modern Parisian apartment in Triolet's *Roses à crédit* is granted its own ironic paragraph: "The Frigidaire had appeared in the kitchen in the middle of the winter. It was enthroned there like Mont Blanc, handsome, cumbersome, and useful" (p. 159). But the object, while fetishized, was less important in and of itself than in its contribution to a total environment, its efficient "communication" with other appliances. Because of the need to provide a physical and emotional separation from the place of work, the nineteenth-century middle-class French home was organized around the

39. In making the original boutique one that sold umbrellas, Demy is participating in a time-honored French tradition: that of using the umbrella to register the outmoded or artisanal world in the face of mass production and accelerated commodification. The best example is the closing chapters of Zola's *Au bonheur des dames,* where the character Bourras's handmade umbrella and cane shop becomes the last holdout against the monstrous department store's takeover of the entire *quartier.* See also Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1923) for a nostalgic evocation of an umbrella and cane shop: "there was an honorable cane merchant who offered a clientele difficult to satisfy a selection of numerous luxurious articles, crafted in such a way as to please to both the body and the wrist" (pp. 29–33).

40. In 1958 one in ten French households contained a refrigerator; three years later 40 percent had one, and by 1969 the number was 75 percent (Michel Winock, *Chronique des années soixante* [Paris: Seuil, 1987], p. 112).

sitting or drawing room, the soft, textured, plushy slipcovers and casings of which were so central to Walter Benjamin's account of the emergence of the detective story during the Second Empire.[41] Gradually in the twentieth century, and certainly by the 1950s and '60s, the modernized kitchen becomes the focal point of family life, as countless fictional and filmic representations made clear: "They always ate breakfast together in the kitchen, on a light green table made of one of those brilliant materials that was always clean. Coffee in a beautiful, perfected coffeemaker, butter, jam, toast . . . flowered bowls and stainless silverware."[42] The kitchen was also the centerpiece of a rationalized home no longer concerned with differentiating itself from the workplace. Claire Duchen has shown how the directives issuing forth from home economic textbooks and women's magazines about the management of the home unabashedly adopted a Taylorist organization program involving a clear distinction between the direction and the execution of tasks and the organization of both space and time to increase production. Housewives were encouraged to perform (or to have performed for them) labor-saving analyses that would help them reduce unnecessary effort and movement and eliminate "useless gestures." Whole articles were devoted to the arrangement of appliances in the ideal kitchen or laundry room; the housewife should be able to proceed from one to another in assembly-line fashion without retracing her footsteps. "Work should advance through space in a continuous, straight line, without useless to and fro or going backwards. Study the entrances and exits, the juxtaposition of rooms to each other in order to make possible this advancement of work in a straight line."[43] For Duchen these developments had the effect of simultaneously elevating the woman and infantilizing her: on the one hand, her Sisyphean task was a science, requiring logical expertise, but on the other, she was newly dependent on authorities outside the home. No longer is a common-sense response, or the vague memory of how one's grandmother performed a task, sufficient—experts must be consulted, precise timetables kept to. By reducing the difference between the home environment and the workplace, housework began to look more like real work—but not to worry, for the domestic appliances, essentially middle-class replacements for the nineteenth-century servants, the new *amis de la femme,* were there to lighten the load. Adrien Forty has shown how manufacturers followed the analogies between home and factory and styled their appliances in forms reminiscent of factory or industrial equipment in order to emphasize the labor-saving efficiency they were claiming for their product.[44]

Was the housewife an assembly-line worker, then, or a white-collar manager, issuing orders to an army of worker-appliances? Certainly the discourse of the

41. See Walter Benjamin on the horror of bourgeois interiors, especially the fragment entitled "Louis-Philippe or the Interior," in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* trans. Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), pp. 167–69.
42. Triolet, *Roses à crédit,* p. 81.
43. Paulette Bernège, cited in Duchen, "Occupation Housewife," p. 5.
44. See Adrien Forty, *Objects of Desire* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

rationalized household in Bernège and in the countless advertisements showing a beautifully dressed and bejeweled woman vacuuming in her high heels worked to promote the latter position. But her ambiguous status placed the housewife in an analogous situation to that of the *jeune cadre* in the factory structure, elevated above the immediate travails of the assembly line, but no less governed by the time clock. And Forty is among the many who dispute the idea that time was actually saved by houswives with the introduction of "labor-saving" devices, citing evidence that domestic appliances cause more time to be spent on housework and not less. Labor-saving appliances save no labor, if only because their introduction into the household is accompanied by a rise in the standards and norms of cleanliness. Nor does the repetitiveness of the tasks change; Christiane Rochefort represents her character Céline in *Les Stances à Sophie* (a woman with a fully modernized house and a Spanish maid) as brought up short by the realization that, in her capacity as steward (*intendant*) of the household, she will have to ponder the question of what its members are to eat for lunch every day of the year for the rest of her life: "And look at the amount of time wasted on that insane activity, one that has to be done again the next day, and the day after, and every day, and to think that there are 365 of them in one year alone and that we don't know how many years there are, and that on every one of those days the question will be asked and must receive an answer."[45] Even the mental work of housework exhibits the fragmentation and repetition characteristic of manual labor. And the new level of women's dependence introduced by the modernized home—on husbands to buy the appliances, on the opinions and directives of experts and specialists to run them and organize them—suggests that the real decision-making power, the *savoir-faire,* has shifted outside of the woman's immediate sphere of control.

II. Keeping House

Writing in 1966, Jean Baudrillard notes a decisive historical change surrounding this idea of the home and the labor taken to maintain it: "This is no longer the traditional housekeeper's obsession: that everything be in its place and that everything be clean. The old one was moral, today's is functional . . . everything must communicate with everything else."[46]

"Everything communicates." In Jacques Tati's treatise on the anxieties of modernization, his 1958 film *Mon Oncle,* the obsessionally clean housewife character, Mme Arpel, repeats this line over and over whenever she shows off her home to guests. "Everything communicates": the line proudly sums up a space designed to promote efficiency of movement and flow of bodies from one room to another,

45. Christiane Rochefort, *Les Stances à Sophie* (Paris: Grasset, 1963), p. 100.
46. Baudrillard, *Le Système des objets,* p. 41.

a kind of interior circulation or traffic like the one we see automobiles involved in outdoors. The joke, of course, is that communication is exactly what is lacking in this sterile, precise, fenced-in suburban home where parents relate to their sullen, silent child in a series of compulsive directives about hygiene: Don't mess up your room, put your books away, wash your hands, hang up your clothes, and so forth.

Baudrillard's observations about "functional" cleanliness replacing an older, premodern, or moral cleanliness find an echo in a remark made by Barthes in the early 1960s concerning the new French vocabulary springing up to denote the desired "shine" of an automobile. "We want it [the car] to be more than clean: *bichonnée* [caressed, pampered, 'cherried'], *briquée* [scrubbed], *lustrée* [waxed and shined]." The desire for the car's shine, according to Barthes, is the desire "to remake the virginity of the object over and over again, to give it the immobility of a material on which time has no effect (the obsession with cleanliness is certainly a practice of immobilizing time)."[47] In Barthes's description as well, the moral value of cleanliness is superseded by a more pressing imperative. To make virgin here is less a moral activity than one that involves making something absolutely (and eternally) new: the object outside history, untouched by time—the object and one's relation to it unchanging, as in a functionalist equilibrium, endlessly reproducing itself.

The desire to immobilize time: five years after commenting upon the "great hunger for cleanliness" sweeping France, Barthes goes one step further, linking the will to cleanliness here with a desire to immobilize time, to step outside of history, or perhaps, by extension, to retreat inside a controlled, rationally created environment superior to one engendered historically. This movement of retreat, or *repliement* (folding back inward)—the dominant social movement of the period—was theorized at the time by Lefebvre and Cornelius Castoriadis under the name of "privatization." Privatization is certainly nothing new; its historical particularity or palpability in the late 1950s and early '60s can only be seen as the result of an *acceleration* in the process by which various spheres of life become progressively separated from one another—the most crucial being that of domestic life from the sphere of work. For Castoriadis privatization constitutes the most striking trait of modern capitalist societies, if only because it is not particular to the working class, but is found among all social categories. It emerges when a society's most important characteristic becomes its success in destroying the political socialization of individuals, such that one experiences public or even social matters not only as hostile or foreign but also as out of one's grasp, unlikely to be affected by one's actions. People are thus sent more firmly back into a retrenchment in private life, from which they attempt to fashion an anchor of sorts—particularly since the value of work, too, has undergone increasing decomposition with the growth of bureaucracy. In the end, privatization for

47. Roland Barthes, "La Voiture, projection de l'égo," *Réalités* 213 (1963), p. 45.

Castoriadis is a manifestation of "the agony of social and political institutions that, having rejected the population, are now rejected by it."[48]

With the decline or decomposition of identities based on work or social collectivities, what remains? For Lefebvre the answer lies in the qualitatively new way that everyday life, private or "reprivatized" life, and family life—or, as I would put it, the idealization of the couple—are intimately linked in this period around the identity of the homedweller, the *inhabitant,* and the practices associated with the sole remaining value left, *the* private value par excellence, that of consumption. To be "at home," like the Duponts in the newsreel, like the married couple in *Les Choses,* like the couple interviewed in Marker's documentary, is to have an identity, one based on security and permanence, which state-produced anxiety and the state-produced compensation for that anxiety have gone a long way in helping create. "The role played by attachment to *métier* is played by attachment to space,"[49] sums up Alain Touraine in *La Société post-industrielle.* Lefebvre is less abstract in this instance, his remarks informed by the numerous contemporary empirical studies of the most widespread French middle-class and working-class fantasy of the period: the house-in-the suburbs (*pavillon*) fantasy.[50] Attachment to space in this instance is not some regionalist sentimentality but rather something quite specific—the desire to be a homeowner:

> The owned or co-owned dwelling (half of French people own their dwellings), the vacation house, not only serves an economic function but security-providing (and thus identity-providing) function as well. Their purchase constitutes a placement. . . . The owner of a single-family dwelling [*pavillon*] . . . is there for life. He has his place in space. He prolongs himself in the Same without the Other taking it away. He is established in the identical, the repetitive, the equivalent. The enduring nature of goods both symbolizes and realizes the permanence of an ego. That ego certainly lives better in its own property than in an anxious state within a lodging it could lose from one day to the next. These trivialities make up the triviality and, thus, the force of the quotidien.[51]

48. See Cornelius Castoriadis, "Le mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne," in *Socialisme ou barbarie* 31–33 (Dec. 1960, Apr. and Dec. 1961); translated as "Modern Capitalism and Revolution" by David Ames Curtis in Castoriadis, *Political and Social Writings,* vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 226–343.

49. Alain Touraine, *La Société post-industrielle* (Paris: Gonthier, 1969), p. 78.

50. *Elle* magazine provided one such study, reporting the results of a survey in 1954 that showed most French people naming their leading (and largely unrealizable) dream to be home ownership. See *Elle,* March 22, 1954: "En 1954 les français font 5 rêves." But the dream was older than that. Immediately after the war the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques conducted a survey that showed 72 percent of French people wanted a single-family dwelling, with 28 percent willing to add a half-hour commute to get one. See Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878–1978* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 251.

51. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne,* vol. 3 (Paris: Arche, 1981), pp. 61–62.

Cartoon by Bosc. Circa 1959.

Privatization, or losing oneself in the repetitions and routine of "keeping house," meant an increasing density in individual use of commodities and a notable impoverishment of interpersonal relations. For both Lefebvre and Castoriadis it constituted above all a flight from history. This flight was not to be construed as the absence of history but rather itself a historical symptom founded on the wish to make the world futureless and at that price to buy security.

Laurence, the main character in Simone de Beauvoir's 1966 *Les Belles images,* is, like Tati's Mme Arpel, the embodiment of the new privatized French middle-class woman, the inhabitant. Tugging at her consciousness throughout the novel is the glimmer of a wider world, more vital, perhaps, than her preoccupations with her troubled daughter, her dissatisfied lover, her desk drawers, and the intrigue at the advertising agency where she works. Several times she attempts to finish reading an article she has begun in a magazine concerning the ongoing torture in Algeria; inevitably her thoughts turn to shampoo.

Torture, shampoo. A contemporary cartoon by Bosc reiterates de Beauvoir's metonymy, making the relation between the new, modernized hygienic France and the *"sale guerre"* across the sea more explicit.[52] The cartoon shows a French paratrooper in camouflage bending over a sudsy bathtub, his hands submerged: A box of Pax laundry soap ("extraordinaire pour la lessive!") stands next to the tub—but a man's feet stick out of the water; the bubbles aren't suds, but rather the tortured man exhaling.

To put a *para,* as they were called, in the place of a housekeeper is to show in what sense Algeria, far from constituting the "other" of France in this period, is better seen as its monstrous and distorted double. Double in that Algeria, like France, will be the scene of some violent housecleaning; distorted, in that French *men,* who would never lift a finger to do housework at home in France, are put to

52. In Agnes Varda's film *Cléo de 5 à 7,* the same metonymy occurs: a taxi radio droning in the background juxtaposes news of rioting in Algeria with advertisements for a new shampoo *à l'americaine* made of whiskey: "Scotch revitalizes your hair!"

work in the homes of Algerians. "In Algeria, the proletariat is more proletarianized than in metropolitan France, and the bourgeoisie more bourgeois, the petit bourgeois more acerbic, and the feudalisms more feudal. And the French Army is more Army."[53] Nowhere was this "doubling" effect more apparent than in the actual conduct of the war. For in revolutionary Algeria of the late 1950s and early '60s, just as in France, the category of the "inhabitant" was assuming a new priority—at least in the writings and practice of the principle French theorist of "psychological action" (torture) and "*pacification,*" Roger Trinquier. In his influential 1961 book, *La Guerre moderne* (immediately translated into an American edition), Trinquier argues that the newness of this kind of war could be attributed to two dimensions: first, to the extent of its actions, which must include the political, economic, psychological, military, etc., and second, to the lack of definition of the enemy. This latter problem is a result, in part, of the altered spatial dimensions of this type of war—the lack, that is, of a delineated battlefield:

> Military schools teaching classic doctrines of warfare rely upon a number of decision factors—the mission, the enemy, the terrain, and the resources.
>
> But one factor that is essential to the conduct of modern warfare is omitted—*the inhabitant.*
>
> The battlefield today is no longer restricted. It is limitless; it can encompass entire nations. The inhabitant in his home is the center of the conflict.[54]

For the Algerian, to be "at home," an inhabitant, is to be at the center of the conflict: the Algerian inhabitant, unlike the French, is not necessarily depoliticized or privatized; to be at home is possibly the most politicized state, the most connected, in solidarity with, the most vitally a part of the nationalist struggle. In Algeria during these years, as in France, the *inhabitant* is central, the status of homedweller newly important—but the identity is inverted.

So, too, do the newly modernized French interiors and techniques, the electricity and indoor plumbing, appear in a distorted, nightmarish guise in their narrative reflection across the sea. To the extent that information could bypass the heavy state system of seizures and censorship activated at the time to condition or cleanse the image of reality reaching French citizens of the international tensions they were involved in, everyday words and everyday places—kitchens and bathrooms—were beginning to take on new and horrific dimensions.[55] The dark

53. Henri Lefebvre, *La Somme et le reste* (Paris: Méridiens Klinchsieck, 1989), p. 171.

54. Roger Trinquier, *La Guerre moderne* (Paris: Editions de la Table Ronde, 1961), translated by Daniel Lee as *Modern Warfare* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 29.

55. The extent of French government censorship during these years was unprecedented. Journals like *L'Express* were seized regularly (twelve times between 1958 and 1962 alone). For the most thorough account of the censorship, see Martin Harrison, "Government and Press in France during the Algerian War," in *The American Political Science Review* 58 (June 1964), pp. 273–85.

underside of French comfort emerges most clearly in the settings described in the first (and most widely read) of the personal accounts of torture by the hands of the French military to be seized by the government, that of French communist Henri Alleg; in fact, the legitimacy of Alleg's testimony was later ascertained by the military authorities because of his ability to describe by memory several of the rooms in the torture building of El-Biar, but particularly the kitchen, where he would never have been taken if the interrogation had been conducted normally.[56] El-Biar, as it emerges in sidelong glimpses throughout Alleg's narrative, is actually a large apartment building under construction: "The bars in the reinforced concrete stuck out here and there from the masonry; the staircase had no balustrade; from the ceilings hung the wires of an unfinished and hasty electrical installation."[57] Alleg duly notes the sparse furnishings of the various rooms where he is taken, whose existence in a half-built, nebulous state of potentiality seems to conjure up the inhabitants of the future, recalling in a grotesque inversion the opening chapter of Perec's *Les Choses,* where the couple's "dream apartment" is laid out meticulously in the conditional tense:

> Your eye, first of all, would glide over the grey fitted carpet in the narrow, long and high-ceilinged corridor. Its walls would be cupboards, in light coloured wood, with fittings of gleaming brass. Three prints, depicting, repectively, the Derby winner Thunderbird, a paddle-streamer named Ville-de-Montereau, and a Stephenson locomotive, would lead to a leather curtain hanging on thick, black, grainy wooden rings which would slide back at the merest touch.[58]

Like the reader of Perec's opening chapter, the reader of Alleg's *testimonio* is eventually, in the course of Alleg's one-month stay at El-Biar, taken on a full tour, shown the whole house:

> I was taken into a large room on the third or fourth floor behind C . . . , apparently the living room of a future apartment. Several collapsible tables, blurred photos of wanted suspects on the wall, a field telephone: these made up all the furniture. (p. 47)
>
> . . . at the end of the corridor I was taken into a cell on the left-hand side; this was in fact a bathroom without fixtures. . . . (p. 85)
>
> One floor down, I entered a small room on the left of the corridor, the kitchen of the future apartment. There was a sink and an earthenware cooking stove, surmounted by a shelf on which the tiles had not yet been laid and only the metal frame was in place. (pp. 48–49)

56. See the introduction to Henri Alleg, *La Question* (Paris: Minuit, 1961), p. 10.
57. Henri Alleg, *The Question,* trans. John Calder (New York: Braziller, 1958), p. 46.
58. Georges Perec, *Things,* trans. David Bellos (Boston: Godine, 1990), p. 21.

In this "kitchen of the future" the water tortures and trial by fire inflicted on Alleg's body by French paratroopers become parodies of domestic functions. Alleg is electrocuted by telephone (the *magneto* was a telephone turned into a torture device) and drowned at the kitchen sink. Everyday objects of comfort are turned against him: "I tried to lie on my stomach but the mattress was stuffed with barbed wire" (p. 66). In narratives from the wars of decolonization, familiar objects appearing in a routine inventory can become metonymically ominous through their proximity to torture implements, as in this matter-of-fact description of his field tent by a French officer in Indochina: "Here's my desk, my table, my typewriter, my washbasin, and over there, in the corner, my machine for making people talk. The dynamo, I mean."[59] Or, as in the case of Djamila Boupacha, raped by French soldiers using a toothbrush and a bottle, any household object can change functions, be altered. Reading the following inventory from a narrative by an Algerian student tortured in Paris, it is difficult to know what to fear most:

> I was led into a room, where they took off my blindfold and handcuffs. I saw two benches about six feet long; two wooden tables; a basin about twenty inches in diameter, full of dirty water; some empty champagne bottles whose necks were stained with blood; a piece of soap; a pile of ropes and rags.[60]

The *gégène*—"a genuine product of civilization"[61]—was a simple electrical apparatus, easily accessible or simple to construct, consisting of wires attached to an electric plug. Any do-it-yourselfer could handle it. And this is exactly how some of the early testimony from draftees about their activities in Algeria (collected primarily by Catholic magazines) sounds: like that of *bricoleurs,* misguided weekend amateurs, clown repairmen: "I myself participated by hooking up electricity to the plastic tubing, and to the bathtub."[62]

The new techniques that were revolutionizing the countryside in France—the arrival, that is, of bathtubs (running water) and electricity[63]—were putting a modern, more hygienic touch on torture as well:

59. Cited in Rita Maran, *Torture: The Role of Ideology in the French-Algerian War* (New York: Praeger, 1989), p. 145.

60. Benaissa Souami, twenty-seven-year-old political science student, cited in Jerome Lindon, ed., *La Gangrène* (Paris: Minuit, 1959); translated by Robert Silvers as *The Gangrene* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1960), p. 42.

61. Pierre Leulliette, *St. Michel et le Dragon* (Paris: Editions de Minuit), translated as *St. Michael and the Dragon* (London: Heinemann, 1964), p. 233.

62. Cited in Xavier Grall, *La Génération du Djebel* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1962), p. 34.

63. In 1954, the year the Algerian revolution began, 59 percent of French households had running water—up from 37 percent in 1946. By 1968 this figure had reached 90.8 percent. In 1954, 28 percent of French households had toilets inside; by 1968, 54.8 percent did. In 1954 only 17 percent of Parisians had a shower or bath in their dwelling. If "comfortable" is defined by the trio of central heating, a toilet inside, and a shower or bath, only 6 percent of French households had achieved this in 1954, as opposed to 63 percent in the United States. See Jean Fourastié, *Histoire du comfort* (orig. published in 1950 as *Les Arts ménagers*) (Paris: PUF, 1973), pp. 106–10.

> Before and after the Algerian War, torturers boasted about employing a *clean* torture, one that didn't leave any traces, and, to the extent that there was "progress" in the techniques of repression, it's obviously there that it took place: the use of electricity leaves fewer traces than pulling out a tooth or a fingernail.[64]

The striking prevalence of the ideologeme of cleanliness in the writings of the period and the struggle over who—what group, what institution, what race, what generation, what gender—was to claim it as a constituent quality suggests that more is at stake here than the wish to dispel or deny "the horrors of war" in general. World Wars One and Two, unlike the Algerian War, were "clean" wars; the distance separating the purity of those conflicts from the current one provided one of the major chasms dividing the French working class during those years: older French workers who had served in the First or Second World War were unsympathetic to the young generations of workers, not considering their war to be "a real war."[65] A Catholic draftee character in Maurienne's 1960 fictionalized *testimonio* about draft desertion, *Le Déserteur,* puts it this way: "I have a father and a grandfather who fought in wars," said Alain, "but they did it more or less cleanly [*proprement*]."[66] The Algerian conflict, from its earliest moments, was known in France as the *sale de guerre*[67]—that is, when its status as a war was even acknowledged. In the final moments of the French empire, the old colonial rhetoric of the "civilizing mission" must be revved up, bolstered, in order to justify what was beginning to leak through the cosmetic discursive blanket thrown over Algerian affairs. In other words, at the peak of the empire's most barbarous behavior, the barbarity of the *Algerian*—his need of cleansing, schooling, civilizing—must be all the more certified.[68] Thus, various specific military operations are given "cleansing" names and functions. In the opening pages of his fictionalized *testimonio, Lieutenant en Algérie,* Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber speaks of the process known as "cleaning up a casbah;"[69] and in army parlance, the nightly patrols by a hundred French tanks along the Morice Line, the sweeping back and forth the length of

64. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *La Torture dans la république* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), p. 13.
65. Ian Birchall mentions this in the context of a reading of Etcherelli's *Elise ou la vraie vie*; see his "Imperialism and Class: The French War in Algeria," in Francis Barker et al., eds., *Europe and Its Others,* vol. 2 (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), pp. 162–74.
66. Maurienne [Jean-Louis Hurst], *Le Déserteur* [orig. published in 1960 by Minuit] (Paris: Editions Manya, 1991), p. 21.
67. As in Claude Bourdet, writing in a March 29, 1956, article in *France-Observateur*: "A hundred thousand young Frenchmen are in danger of being thrown away in the dirty war in Algeria."
68. "Civilizing mission" discourse frequently plays a role in torture sessions, as in the testimony of twenty-six-year-old Moussa Khebaili, who reports a French police officer saying: "You're one of a race I hate, like the Negroes. Now you're going to see what France is really made of—you're just a bunch of slaves. We taught you how to shit in a hole" (*The Gangrene,* p. 69).
69. Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *Lieutenant en Algérie* (Paris: Julliard, 1957), translated by Ronald Matthews as *Lieutenant in Algeria* (New York: Knopf, 1957), p. 3; later in this narrative, a French soldier laments, "The army is the only thing we've got left that's clean" (p. 93).

the two-hundred-mile border to deter border crossings by the FLN in and out of Tunisia, were known as "floor polishing."[70] Perhaps the most striking narrative of internalization of a clean/dirty, civilized/barbarous justification occurs in the testimony of one French draftee:

> They used to ask for volunteers to finish off the guys who had been tortured (so that there would be no trace of it and no danger of stories later). I didn't like the idea—you know how it is—shooting a guy a hundred yards off in battle—that's nothing, because the guy's some way off, and you can hardly see him. And anyway he's armed and can either shoot back or buzz off. But finishing off a defenseless guy just like that—No! Anyway I never volunteered and so in the end I was the only one in the whole sector who had never finished off "his" guy. I was called "chicken" [*p'tit fille*]. One day the captain called me out and said: "I don't like having chickens around—get on with it, the next one's yours." Well, a few days later, there were eight prisoners who had been tortured and who had to be finished off. They called me and in front of all the boys they said: "He's yours, chicken, get on with it." I went up to the guy. He looked at me. I can see his eyes looking at me now. The whole thing revolted me. I fired. The other chaps finished off the rest. After that it wasn't so bad, but the first time—I tell you that turned me up. It's maybe not the cleanest job, but when you think about it, all those guys are criminals really, and if you let them live they'd only go on killing old men, and women and children. You can't let them carry on like that. So really we're cleaning up the country [*on nettoie le pays*], ridding it of all the scum [*racaille*].[71]

On the Algerian side, the struggle to be "clean" is no less pronounced. In his afterword to Alleg's *La Question,* Sartre argues that what is being fought out in the torture chamber is the whole question of *species*: only one of us is a man.[72] In other words, at precisely the moment that the colonized demands, through his or her solidarity within a collectivity, the full status of "human," the colonized must be made to designate him- or herself as humiliated, broken, less than human, an animal. Roger Trinquier also admits that information-gathering is secondary to the true purpose of torture. For him torture was not merely a way of obtaining information at any price but, more importantly, a means of destroying, in each fallen individual, the sense of solidarity with an organization and a collectivity.

70. See Maran, *Torture: The Role of Ideology in the French-Algerian War* (New York: Praeger, 1989), pp. 84–85.

71. Cited in the original edition of Vidal-Naquet, *La Torture dans la République,* printed in English as *Torture: Cancer of Democracy* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), p. 137 (translation altered).

72. See Jean-Paul Sartre, "Une Victoire," afterword to Alleg, *La Question,* pp. 99–122. The most useful philosophical and political meditation on the history of torture is Page duBois's recent *Torture and Truth* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

That this was the desired effect can be seen in the testimony of an Algerian student tortured in Paris who seeks to prevent this loss of the collective; for him, staying "clean" is equivalent to remaining part of the whole: "In the middle of the worst tortures, I thought hard of my brothers and sisters, of Ben M'Hidi, of Djamila; and I constantly repeated to myself that one can be covered with filth [*immondices*] and yet remain clean."[73] Similarly, the Algerian workers on the Citroen assembly line in Claire Etcherelli's *Elise ou la vraie vie* are represented as shunning the soiled *bleu de travail* worn by French workers in favor of clean street clothes: turtlenecks and tweed jackets; Arezki, an FLN organizer, buys an expensive snow-white dress shirt from a shop on the Boulevard Saint Michel simply because, as he puts it, no one would expect an Algerian to have such a thing. The equation of cleanliness with dignity-under-attack is such that in this novel the tactic spreads to the few white French women working in the factory:

> They arrived in the morning, faces made-up and hair arranged, and somehow managed during the day to retire and put on fresh lipstick. There was something there that went beyond coquetry: a display, an instinctive defense against a kind of work that ended by reducing you to the level of a bum—the nail polish more often than not hid the grime; the dirty hair was beribboned with velvet; they patted the grey sweat with powder. I can still see my neighbor in the coatroom, a woman of thirty-five, not pretty, wrinkled, forced by the regulations to wear a discolored denim uniform, and who, while driving a Fenwick, kept on her pumps.[74]

For Fanon, for whom torture was simply inherent in, the very logic of, the colonialist configuration, it was imperative that the Algerians, on their side, fighting their war of liberation, must "do so cleanly," "without barbarity":

> The underdeveloped nation that practices torture thereby confirms its nature, plays the role of an underdeveloped people. If it does not wish to be morally condemned by the "Western nations," an underdeveloped nation is obliged to practice fair play, even while its adversary ventures, with a clear conscience, into the unlimited exploration of new means of terror.[75]

Toward the end of his stay in El-Biar, Henri Alleg reports feeling heartened that the marks and scars from the torture sessions he has undergone are still visible on his body; he takes this as a sign that he will not be executed: ". . . if they

73. Benaissa Souami, cited in Lindon, ed., *The Gangrene,* p. 46.
74. Claire Etcherelli, *Elise ou la vrai vie* (Paris: Editions Denoel, 1967), translated by June Wilson and Walter Benn Michaels as *Elise or the Real Life* (New York: Morrow, 1969), pp. 137–38 (translation altered).
75. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism,* p. 24.

had decided to execute me, they had to have (other than the normal bullet wounds) a 'clean' body in case of autopsy" (pp. 105–6). A clean, unmarked body—or, in the words of the draftee I quoted earlier, "so that there would be no trace of it and no danger of stories later." As the war progresses, the moral sense of trace (the mark of guilt, of wrongdoing) gives way to another: traces must be eliminated that mar the clean functioning of an immense system, that throw a wrench in the works, that force a temporary shutdown. The paratrooper's obsession with eliminating traces (squelching stories, stopping history) is not, to paraphrase Baudrillard, the traditional housekeeper's obsession: that everything be in its place and that everything be clean . . . that was moral, this is functional.[76] At stake is the gradual development by General Massu and his troops of something Massu sought to distinguish as "functional torture"—something comparable to the medical interventions of a surgeon or dentist—as opposed to the premodern, "artisanal" torture practiced in other wars and thus far in Algeria.

Torture, as Roger Trinquier, chief of the "action/information" section, liked to point out, "is something which could be organized."[77] After November 1954, when French recruitment leapt from 60,000 to 500,000 troops on Algerian soil—the largest deployment of French troops outside of France since 1830—it had to be; torture became mass-produced:

> From this period on the practice of torture became so general that it constituted a problem for the whole mass of young Frenchmen called up for service in Algeria. Still more important, the type of war being waged in Algeria could not be carried on at all without the simultaneous use *both of torture and of the mass of young conscripts drawn from the mother country.*[78]

Generalized and routinized, conducted on a mass level after 1954, torture underwent a further noticeable permutation after 1957 when the military took over police duties during the Battle of Algiers: "What had been at the outset an improvization rapidly became a veritable institution with its appropriate structures, its executives [*cadres*], its executors [*executants*], its panoply of accessories, and its rules for functioning."[79] The institution was complete with schools (*écoles de formation de cadres*) for the training of experts or "specialists"; instruction in these schools focused on

76. The morality/functionality distinction played an important role in structuring the debate within the French intellectual circle protesting the war. Much of the protest was conducted on moral grounds involving outrage against the French army's use of torture; other intellectuals, such as Simone de Beauvoir, believed with Fanon that such torture was unexceptional, simply the logic of colonialism: "To protest in the name of morality against 'excesses' or 'abuses' is an error which hints at active complicity. There are no 'abuses' or 'excesses' here, simply an all-pervasive *system.*" Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Hamini, *Djamila Boupacha,* p. 19. See also Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-Francois Sirinelli, eds., *La guerre d'Algérie et les intellecuels français* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1991), especially the articles by the editors and that of Marie-Christine Granjon, "Raymond Aron, Jean-Paul Sartre et le conflit algérien."

77. Roger Trinquier, cited in Vidal-Naquet, *Torture: Cancer of Democracy,* p. 55.

78. Vidal-Naquet, *Torture: Cancer of Democracy,* p. 40.

79. Bernard Droz and Evelyne Lever, *Histoire de la guerre d'Algérie 1954–1962* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 140.

producing a torture that was "clean," which is to say exercised without sadism and without leaving visible traces.[80] Techniques and equipment were standardized:

> Torture became in 1957 a daily and almost banal practice. It functioned everywhere. . . . As for techniques, these hardly varied . . . suspending the body . . . and above all the bathtub and electricity.[81]

> Everywhere in Algeria, no one denies it, veritable laboratories of torture have been installed with electric bathtubs and everything that's necessary [*tout ce qu'il faut*].[82]

A further Taylorization of the process ensued with the clear-cut constitution of a separate managerial apparatus:

> The organisms in charge of "information" took on a quasi-autonomous structure after 1957 and the Battle of Algiers . . . the birth and development of the Center of Interarmy Coordination, completed by the *Dispositif operationnel de protection*. This system represented a great advantage for the authorities. . . . Torture was practiced in a closed circuit, in carefully chosen places, with a highly "qualified" personnel of an exemplary discretion. Career army personnel knew of its existence, but all of the army didn't torture. It was content to accept this method, allowing the specialists to dirty their hands.[83]

A full-fledged, French-style industrial organization was in place, with its pyramidal hierarchy—but here, once again, in keeping with the distorted mirroring of French institutions that such institutions placed in Algeria provided, it is the specialists, the *cadres* who "dirty their hands," who engage in the "hands-on," menial labor, processing the human material, performing the distasteful tasks that had in an earlier moment in the war been left to the *harkis*.[84] The transition from artisanal to industrial activity is recalled in an enlisted man's testimony:

> I was given responsibility for information at the level of a company, which is minimal. It was all played out at a very low level. . . . It was torture . . . well . . . I don't dare use the word because it's a little shameful . . . but, in the end it was artisanal. The DOPs [*Dispositif operationnel de protection*], now they were the professionals.[85]

80. Ibid., p. 140.
81. Ibid., pp. 140–41.
82. Henri Marrou, "France, ma patrie," in *Le Monde*, April 5, 1956.
83. Jean-Pierre Vittori, *Nous, les appelés d'Algérie* (Paris: Stock, 1977), pp. 153–54.
84. Vidal-Naquet reports that in an early stage of the revolution, *harkis* (Arabs fighting on the side of the French) were made to conduct torture sessions so that French officers could "keep their hands clean" (*Torture: Cancer of Democracy*, p. 44). The *harki*-torturer appears as a major character in Assia Djébar's classic novel about the revolution, *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* (Paris: 10/18, 1962).
85. Cited in Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l'oubli: la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Découverte, 1992), p. 29.

The DOPs, or managers, divided the city into subsections, "each of which had its own 'sorting center' [*centre de tri*][86] which included a torture chamber."[87] These centers, established in all the major Algerian cities, helped make torture more efficient—and henceforth anything could be justified according to a criterion of efficiency: "The Orleansville center, which was set up in an old barn, and the Constantine center, which was in Ameziane Farm, turned into conveyor-belt establishments where torture was applied with scientific precision."[88]

From his privileged vantage point as human material being processed through one such center—the major one, El-Biar—Henri Alleg is able, as he puts it, "for a month, to observe how the torture factory worked" (p. 113): that is, its division of labor, its productivity, its employees at work. And "work" is the word used by the paratroopers to describe their activity: "When he didn't go on a sortie, Erulin and his men 'worked' on the suspects who had previously been arrested" (p. 116). Torture in El-Biar is simply "the routine order of the day" (*la routine de la maison*):

> The torture went on until dawn, or very nearly. Through the partition, I could hear shouts and cries, muffled by the gag, and curses and blows. I soon knew that this was in no way exceptional, but just the routine order of the day. (p. 87)

Time-saving strategies are devised and practiced:

> I just had time to see a naked Moslem being kicked and shoved into the corridor. While S__, C__, and the others were "looking after" me, the rest of the group were continuing their "work" using the same plank and the magneto. They had been "questioning" a suspect in order not to lose any time. (p. 59)

The "transit center" at El-Biar for Alleg is the double of the factory—or, as in the Bosc cartoon, the perverse double of a newly Taylorized French notion of keeping house, where household tasks like "cleaning up the Casbah" and "floor-polishing" are performed largely at night: "But it was at night that the transit center really came to life: preparations, suspects, noise. . . . Then all of a sudden, the first cries of the victims cut through the night. The real work of Erulin, Lorca and the others had begun" (pp. 115–116). Keeping house: for what was at stake was the question of who, precisely, was "at home" in Algeria. "Algeria *is* France": the endlessly reiterated refrain; or, its variant, "France is *at home* in Algeria."[89] But how, asked Frantz Fanon in 1959, "are Algerians supposed to, as General de

86. Sorting centers, or sometimes translated as "transit centers"—in either case, centers for the movement, storage, and processing of human material.
87. Vidal-Naquet, *Torture: Cancer of Democracy*, p. 53.
88. Ibid., p. 56.
89. Attributed most notably to Michel Debré, Prime Minister under de Gaulle.

Gaulle has ingenuously invited them to, 'return to their homes' [*rentrent chez eux*]? What meaning can this expression have for an Algerian today?"[90] Especially since, for an Algerian, to be "at home" is to be at the very center of the conflict.

For Henri Alleg, inhabitant of El-Biar, time moves differently; he recounts the growing sensation of losing track of time, of falling out of the calendar. That a torture victim should have difficulty differentiating one day from another is not surprising. But the bored, rote demeanor of the torturers—whose thoughts are unrecorded in Alleg's text—suggests an experience of numbed repetition so removed from the "vertical" temporality of event as to rejoin any number of contemporary descriptions of days on the assembly line, or Christiane Rochefort's character Céline in *Les Stances à Sophie* as she is reluctantly inducted into the repetitive tasks of "keeping house." And the ideal torture victim, one who emerges fresh and unmarked from one session, ready to undergo another, recalls Barthes's description of something—a freshly shined automobile, to be precise—"given the immobility of material on which time has no effect." Torturer and tortured, the relation unchanging, as in a functionalist equilibrium, endlessly reproducing itself. Torture in the Algerian War strove to "leave no traces"—which is to say, to immobilize time, or to function as an ahistorical structural system. Faced with an insurgent force with history on its side, the whole colonial system is forced, in its final moments, to modernize: to construct a systemic spatial structure coextensive with the whole terrain, a structure so smoothly and cleanly functional that it could stop the forward movement of time.

90. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism,* p. 31.